

Roots of World Systems Theory

- Why is the Third World Poor?
- Richest 358 people have net worth = poorest 2.5 billion
- Globalization: latest expression of long-term geohistorical processes: imperialism, colonialism
- 8 Dimensions of Globalization (T&F: 3)
 1. Financial
 2. Technological
 3. Economic
 4. Cultural
 5. Political
 6. Ecological
 7. Geographical
 8. Sociological

Social Change in WST

- Social change usually takes the state as the unit of “society”
- WST postulates a world-system that is a single society; change within a country can only be understood through understanding the country’s relationship within the world-system
- Wallerstein draws on 2 schools of thought
 1. French Annales School of History (Fernand Braudel 1973)
 - Holistic approach to understanding history; not just a focus on political processes
 - Examines economic and social roots of history, not just the political façade (materialist approach)
 2. Dependency Theory (Gunder Frank 1967)
 - Neo-Marxist critique of development theory

Developmentalism / Modernization Theory

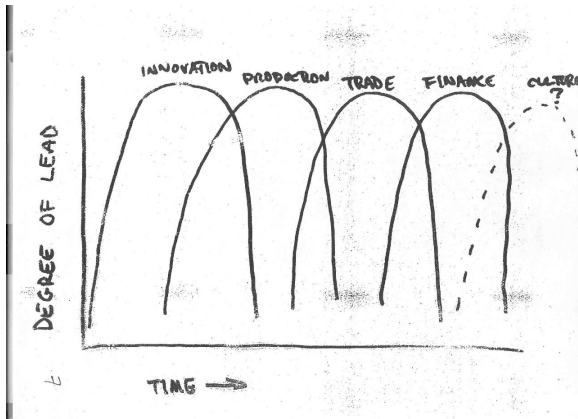
- Process by which a traditional society using primitive technology transforms into a modern society with high technology, high income
- Replace labor-intensive subsistence production with techniques that require capital, skilled labor, scientific knowledge
- Development is a linear process; all countries can move through the stages of development as did the European countries
- Rostow’s (1967) stages of economic growth (“ladder”)
- Critique

Dependency Theory

- When Britain and other industrializing countries were at the bottom of Rostow's "ladder" there were no countries at the top involved in mass-consumption
- If India is to develop, where is its resource periphery?
- Dependence is not an original condition, it developed through the expansion of European influence:
 1. European capital initiates production for exchange in periphery
 2. Introduction of wage labor
 3. Means of production owned by European businesses
- D.T. prescription: isolation from world economy: import substitution, autarky

Hegemony in WST

- political power is driven by technological innovation
- major innovation occurs in cycles
- each cycle has an A-phase of growth, and a B-phase of stagnation
- the country in which the innovation occurs gains an initial advantage which CAN lead to hegemony
 1. innovation
 2. production advantage
 3. trade/commercial advantage
 4. financial advantage
 5. political and cultural dominance



Understanding Wallerstein's Hegemony

- More than just a single state dominating world politics: cultural dominance
 - Hegemon: image of the future, the “modern”
 - The economic, social, cultural and political leader
- Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937): “hegemony” describes the ways in which ruling classes use a dominant ideology to conceal their control of the masses. The hegemon:
 - Defines political norms
 - Defines the ruling ideas of society
 - Gets others to want what it wants (soft power)

Wallerstein's Short Hegemonies

1. Dutch Half-Century, 1625-1670
 2. United Kingdom Half-Century, 1830-1870
 3. United States Quarter-Century, 1945-1970
- Based on economic lead, which enables political and military power.
 - Not an absolute measure, but based on relative gap with competitors.

Understanding the B-Phase

- Hegemons decline with the start of a B-phase
- Cycles occur because the capitalist mode of production lacks central control, the market relies on competition which implies multiple decentralized decision-making > overproduction > B
 - Example: recycled petro-dollars
- Political struggles within and between countries represent the attempt to capture core processes within a state's borders (material roots of conflict)
- Production shifts to s/p or periphery
 - End of monopoly in production yields a decline in profitability, the innovator needs to reduce production costs (mechanization, cheaper labor)
 - Lag: technology transfer, maintain monopoly ALAP

George Modelski vs. Wallerstein

- Both are lumpers: they impose order on the past and look for patterns (splitters: celebrate specificity and uniqueness)
- Both: rise and fall of great powers occurs in a cyclical pattern

Modelski reacts against two traditions in I.R.

1. Realist school that presents I.R. as anarchic
2. Marxist political-economists ascribe to economic determinism that obscures political processes; geopolitics must be understood separately from world economic structures
 - Examples

Modelski’s Global System

- Begins c. 1500, five 100-year cycles corresponding to the division of the centuries, each dominated by a “world power”
 - 16th C: Portugal
 - 17th C: Dutch
 - 18th C: Britain
 - 19th C: Britain
 - 20th C: U.S.

Modelski’s “World Powers” Defined

1. Military: a world power initially has 50% of the naval resources available to all the “global powers”
 - Global powers control either 10% of all capital ships or 5% of the total naval expenditures of the “great powers”
2. Political-military complex: a world power is a state that engages in over 50% of the “order keeping” functions of the global political system (a pre-requisite is a sizeable navy)

Modelski's Cycle of Power

- Begins in a period with weak global organizational structure, which degenerates into warfare between the great powers
- One state emerges from this core war with its navy relatively intact
- As the only world power, this state orders the political system
- The world power experiences its zenith in the decade immediately following the core war
- Other great powers begin rebuilding fleets, the world power's relative share of global naval resources diminishes
- Stages: unipolar > bipolar > multipolar > weakly organized system > war
- Critique

Critique of Modelski #1

- Focus on naval power as the source of hegemony is too narrow
- Modelski's thesis: naval power grants the hegemon "global reach" to maintain international order
- While air power has taken on many duties of global policing, the movement of large numbers of troops and hardware is still performed by the navy
- The U.S. airforce has 50 C-17 aircraft, which can move one Abrams tank at a time; no European country has an aircraft large enough to carry a full-size tank
- Coasts, national waters, chokepoints still policed by navies
- Navy as platform for air power > power projection

Nuclear Weapons

- An essential guarantor of international status and security: other states must respect the sovereignty of a nuclear-state; a security blanket for a state's conventional forces
- A deterrent, not a practical tool of police activity: nuclear weapons are primarily a weapon of last resort, they have limited means to project power abroad

Flaw in the Naval Thesis

- Naval power is an attribute of a hegemon’s overall power
- The naval thesis is descriptive, not explanatory: what explains a state’s great naval power? (Naval power is a product of economic/industrial capacity)
- What explains the timing of the rise and fall of naval powers?
- What explains the social and political influence of states that lack naval power? (Nasser’s Egypt 1954-70, Cold War India, Japan 1980s, Saudi Arabia today)
- Naval power is just one indicator of hegemony, economic and social indicators have been excluded
- Indicators do not provide a theory of causation: what is the mechanism of change?

Critique of Modelski #2

- Does not provide a sufficient mechanism of change in the global political system
- The root of this failure lies in Modelski’s distinction between political and economic processes
- Modelski views the global political system as distinct from the world-economy, he misses the interdependence of economic and political processes and of capitalist and state interests
- Weber: capitalists must seek control over political processes
- Overlooking the economic processes that underlie political cycles, Modelski invokes a systemic need for order to explain the rise and fall of hegemons

Wallerstein’s Political-Economy Approach

- A single logic in which political-military power and the appropriation of surplus value through the production of commodities for sale on the world market are integrated
- Production advantage can be converted into political-military strength, and political-military force can be used to increase a state’s share of world surplus. Example?
- State managers are either embedded in capital interests or are heavily influenced by them
- The interdependence of political and economic processes is supported by Kondratieff waves: 40-60 year business cycles associated with “non-economic” events such as interstate wars and revolutions
- Example: U.S. geopolitics during the Cold War
